

17 May 1960

U-2 PILOT BRIEFING

1. There can be no doubt that after the recent loss of a U-2 aircraft in the USSR, the pilot gave certain information to the Soviets which they could not have obtained from any other sources. On the other hand, the extent and character of additional (as distinct from confirmatory) information thus supplied would appear to be limited. It should be remembered that the Soviets knew a great deal about the U-2 operation from their tracking of the final mission and earlier ones, from their access to overtly published information about the use of the U-2 for weather research, and not least from the remains of the U-2 itself. Specifically, they must be presumed to have known: the performance of the aircraft (altitude, range, and speed), its general configuration, the exact flight plan for this mission including the planned destination (since they captured the pilot's chart) and, of course, the fact that it was engaged on a photographic reconnaissance mission. They are believed to have known for some time that U-2s were based at Adana, Turkey, and Atsugi, Japan. They even knew the designation of the aircraft, which was used in a radio Peking broadcast concerning an alleged overflight of China. The significance of their possession of the pilot was not that he was in a position to add very much to their knowledge but rather that he could be (and presumably will be) put on the witness stand to corroborate assertions in support of which the Soviets could adduce little or no convincing evidence. For instance, their radar tracks and even an alleged copy of the pilot's chart could all be fabricated evidence if there were not a living U.S. witness to confirm it.

2. On all operational missions, U-2 pilots were given the following instructions:

First, it was their duty to ensure the destruction of the aircraft and its equipment to the greatest extent possible. This could best be accomplished by bailing out and actuating the destructor so that the aircraft would suffer the effects both of the detonation in the equipment bay and then of the crash of the fragments of the aircraft. If for any reason the pilot could not carry out this maneuver, he was instructed to make a forced landing and to actuate the destructor as he left the aircraft.

- 2 -

Second, upon reaching the ground, it was the pilot's first duty to attempt escape and evasion so as to avoid capture entirely or to delay it as long as possible. Various items of equipment carried by the pilots were standard escape and evasion aids. In the event of a bail out, it was not physically possible for them to get rid of this equipment until after reaching the ground because it is carried in a seat pack which has to remain attached to the pilot's harness during parachute descent.

Third, pilots were equipped, as has been reported, with a device for instantaneous self-destruction but they were not given positive instructions to make use of it. In the last analysis this ultimate decision is inevitably made by the individual himself and instructions can have but a limited effect. Moreover, the whole background and training of these men was in the piloting and navigation of aircraft, not in conventional techniques of espionage.

Fourth, the instructions for the contingency of capture were that pilots should delay as long as possible the revelation of damaging information. It was recognized, however, on the basis of experience in World War II and in the Korean War, that ultimately the captors would be able to extract most or all information available to a captured pilot. Accordingly, primary reliance was placed on compartmentation which would deny the pilots access to sensitive information other than that concerning the operations in which they were participating. Faced with the incontrovertible evidence already in the hands of the Soviets concerning his mission and the whole U-2 project, it is not surprising that the pilot was induced to add some other details such as the names of certain other individuals in the same program.

Finally, pilots were specifically briefed that, if and when confronted with the undeniable fact of U.S. Government sponsorship of their mission, they should state truthfully that this was

- 3 -

an activity of the Central Intelligence Agency, rather than of any other part of the Government. This briefing reflected a policy decision that if the U-2 program were compromised, it should stand revealed as an intelligence collection activity, under civilian, not military, control and having no harmful or aggressive purposes. The revelation that this Agency conducts illegal intelligence collection activities is considered less damaging than the admission of such a role by the Military establishment.

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